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ABSTRACT

The Coordinated Assistance, Services and Training (CAST) program reaches out to identify, counsel, and provide services for Hispanic women who are single-parent homemakers. The program is designed to increase their involvement in vocational training, provide them with support services, and help them secure and retain higher-paying jobs. The program includes three phases. Phase 1 entails intake, assessment, and counseling; phase 2 involves placement in training and/or a job as well as ongoing counseling and supportive services; and phase 3 consists of client follow-up and continuation of counseling (in the form of more intensive educational and career planning). During its first year of operation, CAST provided counseling and assessment services to more than 169 clients. A series of vocational orientation workshops were held for 62 women, and 54 clients were placed in vocational training or employment. At the same time, the program has helped increase public awareness of vocational training and job opportunities for women. (MN)

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Annual Report

FY 86-87

A. CONTRACT NUMBER:

B. PROJECT TITLE: Coordinated Assistance, Services and Training (C.A.S.T.)

C. PROJECT DIRECTOR: Dr. Karen McCloud

D. TELEPHONE NUMBER: 247-3832

E. ORGANIZATION NAME: Middlesex County Vocational-Technical Schools

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ABSTRACT

The Coordinated Assistance, Services, and Training (C.A.S.T.) program reaches out to identify, counsel, and provide services for Hispanic women who are single-parent homemakers. The program is designed to increase their involvement in vocational training, provide support services, and help them secure and retain higher-paying jobs.

During its first year of operation, C.A.S.T. has demonstrated effectiveness. Over 169 clients have been served with counseling and assessment. A series of vocational orientation workshops involved 62 women, and 54 clients were placed in vocational training or employment. At the same time public awareness of vocational training and job opportunities for women has been significantly increased.

INTRODUCTION

Hispanic women are at the lowest end of the economic ladder and lack access to better training and job opportunities. Many are unaware of the importance and availability of vocational training. Further problems exist in regard to child care, transportation, and self-confidence.

C.A.S.T. (Coordinated Assistance, Services and Training) was designed to increase the participation of Hispanic women who are single parents in training, support services and higher paying jobs. The program is based in the Women's Job Center of Middlesex County Vocational and Technical School, Perth Amboy campus.

The program is comprised of three phases. Phase I includes intake, assessment, and counseling. Phase II involves placement in training and/or jobs, in addition to on-going counseling and support services. Phase III is a continuation and follow-up with persons involved in other phases. During this phase clients need more intensive educational and career planning.

In the past year 169 C.A.S.T. clients have benefited from the counseling, support, and training services offered to help them improve their economic status and step up from the lowest rung of the economic ladder.

GOAL

C.A.S.T., targets Hispanic women who are heads of household. Its stated goal for fiscal year 1987 was

To recruit for counseling, assessment, and career planning 60 single Hispanic mothers and to place 50 of them in vocational training and/or jobs.

C.A.S.T. attained and exceeded its goal. It recruited 62 Hispanic women for counseling, assessment, and career planning. It placed 54 of them in vocational training and/or jobs.

OBJECTIVES

C.A.S.T. accomplished the five objectives which were formulated for the program.

The objectives were:

1. Form advisory committee and hold 4 meetings.
2. Recruit and enroll for counseling 60 Hispanic women who are heads of household.
3. Place a minimum of 50 women in training or jobs and follow-up.
4. Provide series of vocational orientation workshops for 60 women to increase awareness and improve employability.
5. Publicize project throughout county.

ACTIVITIES

In order to meet the program goal and to implement its five objectives C.A.S.T. personnel instituted and participated in a wide variety of activities.

Objective 1. Form advisory committee and hold 4 meetings.

The Advisory Committee represents a wide spectrum of agencies, employers, clientele, and resources. It provides a network of referral, outreach to communities, public relations, support services and employment.

It is comprised of the following:

Lydia Trinidad, Executive Director, Puerto Rican Association for Human Development

Julie Figueroa, President, Puerto Rican Women's Club

Yvonne Campis, Outreach Daycare Coordinator, Puerto Rican Association for Human Development

Dr. J. Henry Zanzalari, Superintendent, Middlesex County Vocational-Technical Schools

Dr. Karen McCloud, Principal-New Brunswick Vocational-Technical School, Director of Women's Programs, Middlesex County Vocational-Technical Schools

Angela B. Mackaronis, Director, Middlesex County Board of Social Services

Betty Street, President, Middlesex County Council of Parent and Teacher Association, Inc.

Debra Wells, Social Worker, Middlesex County Board of Social Services

Gregory J. Levine, Assistant Administrative Supervisor, Middlesex County Board of Social Services

Jay Ziznewski, Esquire, Toolan, Abbott, Domenichetti, Ziznewski

Karen Glass, CAPS Social Worker

Lawrence H. Krampf, President, Krampf Communications

Yvette Fordham, Civic League of Greater New Brunswick

The Advisory Committee held the following 4 meetings:

September 24, 1986 - This was an organizational meeting where the program goal and objectives were explained. Members were encouraged to refer clients. In addition, there was a presentation on services available, and how to access them, from Middlesex County Department of Social Services.

February 20, 1987 - At this breakfast meeting discussion centered on the program's progress. Suggestions for continued growth and success were presented.

March 31, 1987 - A formal meeting followed the Advisory Dinner given by Middlesex County Vocational-Technical Schools for all of its Advisory Committees. Following reports committee members voiced strong support and encouragement for the women's programs.

May 13, 1987 - In conjunction with regular High School Open House, the C.A.S.T. program held a "Gala" reception. Its adult clients were invited to visit and tour the shops with parents and others from the community. Helium-filled balloons added a festive note to the activity in the Women's Job Center. Advisory committee members were honored guests as well. During the course of the evening C.A.S.T. door prizes created by students were awarded.

At each meeting valuable information was exchanged. Committee members evidenced commitment by their regular attendance and cooperation. There were at least 50 referrals from committee members. Ms. Lydia Trinidad, Executive Director, Puerto Rican Association for Human Development, also served as a resource for developing radio programs and publicity. Some clients were referred to agencies and personnel represented on the Advisory Committee.

Objective 2. Recruit and enroll for counseling 60 Hispanic women who are heads of household.

In accordance with the implementation plan the coordinator made at least 60 different presentations to community groups about training and job opportunities for women.

She addressed such groups as Daycare Mother's groups, Interagency Council, Clergy Association, various church groups, parent-teacher groups at local public schools, many social service agencies, pregnant teen groups, and high school seniors. There were presentations to Middlesex County Commission on the Status of Women and at NJVEA convention in Atlantic City.

Program information in both Spanish and English was widely disseminated. Over 150 community groups received printed information about C.A.S.T. Services were also promoted via brochures and bilingual information posted in such places as welfare and JTPA offices, neighborhood stores, laundromats, public libraries, and church bulletin boards. All in all over 114 agencies or groups were involved in C.A.S.T. outreach activities. Services were promoted via electronic and print media as well. (See Objective 5.)

As a result of intense recruitment activity, publicity, and referrals from the Advisory Committee, 169 persons were recruited and received assessment services. Of those, 115 enrolled for counseling and received intensive career planning services.

There was a measurable change in attitude towards self and work as shown by pre-tests and post-tests given to a random sample. There was a 26% increase in scores on an Employability Competency test which measures attitude towards self and work. There was an 80% gain in knowledge of options, opportunities, and resources.

Objective 3. Place a minimum of 50 women in training or jobs and follow up.

C.A.S.T. personnel provided both individual and group assistance with decision-making, career exploration, job search, readiness, networking, and self-presentation. After matching assessment and test results, appropriate training or job recommendations were made.

All clients were encouraged to tour at least three shop areas where they could speak to individual shop teachers and students. This process ensured informed decision-making when the counselor and client met again. Once it was determined that the client wished vocational training, she was assisted in applying and given all relevant information regarding attendance and course requirements.

At the same time child care and transportation needs were discussed. Clients were given information and referrals to assist them in finding, for example, day-care funding sources and babysitters. Clients received maps with county-wide bus routes. If car pool arrangements seemed feasible C.A.S.T. personnel encouraged the client to arrange them.

Various group activities helped provide support. "Rap sessions" where students could talk about their situations, in shop, on the job, at home were held weekly.

Students hosted a recruiting breakfast and a gala open house/reception. At the beginning of training students met with school guidance counselors who welcomed further discussions as warranted. At all times clients felt free to bring problems to C.A.S.T. personnel, seeking either solutions, or an opportunity to ventilate and discuss.

Fostering self-confidence in these women was a high priority throughout all activities. They were encouraged to aspire to good jobs and they were complimented and encouraged when English seemed difficult. Frequent phone or mail contact was a key as well.

Shop teachers who evaluated students noted an extremely significant change in skill level demonstrated by work in shop.

Income for those who finished training has increased in 100% of the cases. Sixty percent of C.A.S.T. clients secured jobs after counseling or training and earn over 5.50/hour. Those who are continuing training can look forward to even higher-paying jobs.

The job retention rate is high-85%. (Statistics are for a short time-in most cases less than 6 months.) Women have been able to succeed at training and at securing higher-paying jobs. Their satisfaction is reflected in the retention rate.

Solid training and pre-employment counseling have helped them find and retain suitable jobs. Other women have entered two-year training programs (e.g. Technical Drafting) and will continue in September. In addition, some have been able to train half-days only and intend to resume training in September.

A total of 54 were placed in vocational training or employment.

Objective 4. Provide series of vocational orientation workshops for 60 women to increase awareness and improve employability.

The C.A.S.T. coordinator presented a series of workshops which stressed confidence building activities, exploration of training and job opportunities. The workshop presentations included information on support services, job market projections, budgeting, parenting, and problem solving. At all times women were encouraged to express themselves freely. Often discussions were in Spanish. However, the groups were led to the realization that English is usually a necessity for access to training and higher-paying jobs. The vocational workshops were an effective recruiting tool. Of the 62 women who participated in the workshops 24 of them continued with further counseling or training.

There was a 100% change in knowledge of resources and opportunities available as none of the participants had been aware of the availability of free training for women in the vocational schools. Pre-tests and post-tests given to participants indicated a marked increase in knowledge of topics covered during the workshops. There was also a measurable positive change in attitude toward self and work as shown by pre- and post-testing.

Ninety-four percent (58 women) actually completed the workshop series.

Objective 5. Publicize project throughout county.

C.A.S.T. conducted an extremely successful publicity campaign throughout the county. Two newsletters were published and disseminated. Local welfare recipients received information in both Spanish and English about the program in with their monthly checks.

Six articles about C.A.S.T. appeared in print; three of them included pictures. A series of 7 PSA's was developed. The announcements air on WCTC 1450 am and WMGQ 98.3 fm. In addition, two radio programs highlighting C.A.S.T. were presented. These "Community Needs" programs each lasted one hour and emphasized the desirability and accessibility of vocational training for women.

Publicity, including "word of mouth", generated over 50% of program referrals.

SUMMARY

C.A.S.T. has enjoyed a very successful first year. Its goal of recruiting 60 single Hispanic women for counseling, assessment, and career planning was met and surpassed, since 62 were recruited.

Fifty-four Hispanic women were placed in vocational training and/or jobs, surpassing the program goal of 50. All in all 169 persons were involved in various aspects of the program.

Participation of Hispanic single parents in vocational training and higher-paying jobs has increased dramatically as a result of C.A.S.T. outreach, support, and training. At the same time, public awareness of vocational training and job opportunities for women has significantly increased.

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